

Dragonshards

Church of the Silver Flame, Part 1

By Keith Baker



"Why do you hurt your fellow citizens?"

The innkeeper froze. "What?"

"I can see the greed swirling in your soul," Handor said. "Do you water down your ale? Charge three crowns when the price is two? Or worse?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," the man stammered. His eyes flickered down to Handor's blade.

"I am a paladin of the Silver Flame. I am sworn to fight evil in all its forms. My sword is for the fiends and monsters that deserve neither reason nor mercy. But you are no monster, and you can still find redemption." Handor put his hand on the hosteller's shoulder. "Consider your actions. Think about those you have harmed. Seek out a minister and cleanse your soul. The true darkness is rising, and if we are to survive we must all find a path to the light. If you cannot . . . then perhaps you are a monster, after all."

Core Beliefs

The Silver Flame has existed since the dawn of time. When Eberron was overrun by darkness and the demon spawn of Khyber, the Flame arose to bring light to the world and to bind the fiends in the depths of the Dragon Below. But the Flame was too pure for flawed humanity, and the people of Khorvaire could not hear its call -- until Tira Miron set upon her righteous path. This noble warrior had devoted her life to the cause of honor and sacrifice, and in her the Flame found a worthy vessel. Guided by a glorious feathered serpent, Tira gave her life to end the reign of a demon lord that had escaped its bond. Though she fell in battle, Tira's soul joined with the Silver Flame, and in so doing, she became a conduit -- a voice that humanity could hear. Across Thrane, the pure of heart heard her call; and ever since then, the Church of the Silver Flame has stood against evil, whatever form it might take.

The Silver Flame is not an anthropomorphic deity. It is a celestial force comprised of a vast multitude of noble spirits. It neither requires sacrifices of gold or spices, nor does it want praise in the form of prayer. Instead, it needs bold warriors and pure ministers who will embrace the light and use that inspiration to banish evil from the world. A typical worshiper of the Sovereign Host offers prayers in the hopes that the deities will help him; a true follower of the Silver Flame is interested only in how she can serve the cause of the flame.

The Afterlife: Some say that when a true follower of the Flame passes on, his spirit joins with the Silver Flame, strengthening the light. While some people may see this as a mediocre reward, the priests of the Flame say that they can achieve no greater bliss and that glory beyond anything that can be experienced in life awaits -- not to mention that this far surpasses the experience of wasting away in Dolurrh. For this reason, clerics of the Silver Flame are loathe to raise the dead; when a true hero dies, his spirit has gone to a better place, and he continues to fight from the other side. Gold rarely influences a true priest of the Flame; the cleric brings the hero back only if she believes he has a noble purpose to serve in this life, and this often involves a quest or vow.

Human Evil: The goal of the Church is to cleanse the world of evil. In the minds of most outsiders, this conjures up images of templars and exorcists fighting with sword and spell. But the vast majority of the members of the Church are not warriors. More people are in the ministry and the Order of Friars than in the Order of Templars, and they seek to battle evil by nurturing good. A Thrane farmer who is faithful to the Flame does not fight demons. But he seeks to live his life by the ideals of the Church: to help those in need, to encourage virtuous behavior, and to be a force of light in the world. Gradations of evil exist, and while no mercy can be granted to the demon, hope remains that the greedy merchant or the arrogant king may follow a different path if shown how. The minister -- and the paladin -- leads by example and demonstrates to others the errors of their ways. With this said, puritans of the Flame may be less forgiving and more apt to use violence as a tool to eliminate social evils as well as supernatural forces.

Other Faiths: While the Church of the Silver Flame seeks to abolish the worship of the Blood of Vol, the Cults of the Dragon Below, and the Dark Six, it can be tolerant of other religions. Warriors of the Flame have much in common with the followers of Dol Arrah, and the teachings of Aureon and Boldrei echo those of the Church. With that said, followers of the Sovereign Host are often somewhat lackadaisical in their faith, and this often draws disdain from the faithful of the Church. A loyal member of the Church can associate freely with followers of the Sovereign Host or the Path of Light, but a zealous friar will still try to lure them to the true faith.

The Fury of the Flame

The ministry of the Silver Flame performs countless good works throughout the Five Nations, but the actions of the templars often overshadow these efforts. The most dramatic instance of this occurred when the inquisition destroyed the lycanthropes. To outsiders, this wholesale slaughter may seem shocking and unforgivable. However, a few factors can help people understand how such an event could occur -- and what the Church might do in the future.

- The Church of the Silver Flame operates under a strict hierarchy. The Church expects the faithful to trust the wisdom of those who stand above them, since those higher in the hierarchy stand closer to the Flame. Thus, most templars act without questioning their orders: If a cardinal authorizes an action, it must be in the best interests of the world. This is especially true of the puritans.
- The ultimate goal of the Church is to cleanse Eberron itself. For many members of the Church, this noble goal justifies any means required to reach it. This manner of thinking serves as one of the sources of evil-aligned priests within Thrane. Such a priest may be good in almost all ways, but she has a willingness to employ evil tools -- such as torture -- when necessary to achieve a goal that furthers the Church's cause.
- When the Church targets a problem, it seeks to completely eliminate it. The templars act with ruthless efficiency. In the case of lycanthropy, any lycanthrope can afflict a victim with a curse that alters behavior and alignment, and this makes the victim a threat to others and a new carrier for the curse. In 832 YK, the Keeper of the Silver Flame declared that lycanthropy afflicted the soul as well as the body, since it could turn the noblest soul to a tool of darkness. Even those lycanthropic strains that were not inherently evil still force a change of behavior on the subject, and were thus suspect; the Keeper declared that these still imperiled the soul. If a single lycanthrope remained alive, it could pass the curse to others, and they could pass the curse to others, and within a generation the problem could arise anew. Thus all lycanthropes -- even those seemingly innocent and young -- must be destroyed.

A handful of paladins found alternatives. Some helped werebears escape to Lamannia, while others sought to cure the afflicted. Unfortunately, the process of breaking the curse is long and involved, and the Keeper of the Flame said that once the curse was set (via changing alignment), nothing could save the

victim's soul. And so the templars relied on their silvered swords, cutting out the cancer and praying for forgiveness when innocents fell at their hands.

The Church is fighting a war, and it intends to win. Casualties are certain. Sacrifices must be made, and allies may fall to friendly fire. But the Church will always act swiftly, decisively, and in a manner that serves the greater good -- at least, as the cardinals see it.

The idea that good people can do evil and that evil people can serve the cause of good is a central theme of Eberron. The Church of the Silver Flame embraces this paradox. It has a noble cause. The majority of its followers champion the ways of the light. And yet, with the best of intentions, they can become your enemies -- or you may be asked to do questionable things in the service of the Church.

Next: Using the Church!

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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